(a) whether any comprehensive plan for promotion and development of tourism sector in the different parts of the country including Lakshadweep Islands;

(b) if, so the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (c) Department of Tourism Government of India has prepared draft 20 years perspective plans for different States and Union Territories by engaging professional consultants. In case of Lakshadweep Islands the final plan has been prepared in consultation with State Government. Government of Andhra Pradesh has got a plan prepared on its own. Government of West Bengal availed of an assistance of Rs. 10.00 lakhs from the Department of Tourism for preparation of such a plan.

Creation of National Park around the Taj Mahal

84. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of fresh projects have been drawn up to attract more tourists to the Taj Mahal by beautifying the heritage corridor and creating a National Park around this world famous monument; and

(b) if so, the details of the proposals including the financial contribution offered by the sponsors, if any?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The Department of Culture on behalf of the National Culture Fund and the Archaeological Survey of India have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Hotels Company Limited for providing financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 187.00 lakhs for taking up the conservation, beautification and environmental development of the Taj Mahal and its surroundings.

(b) The sub-projects include:

(1) Conservation and preservation of eastern wall;

(2) Restructuring the display in the existing museum;

(3) Providing visitor facility amenities including installation of mechanised security systems;

(4) Restoration and preservation of the northern wall;

(5) Restoration of missing inlay pieces;

(6) Structural repairs to the monuments in the Taj Complex;

(7) Developing the gardens at Taj Mahal;

Out of the above, visitor facility centres and installation of security systems and repairs to the main entrance gate have been earmarked for execution in the 1st phase.

Reduction of taxes in hotel and tourism industry

85. SHRI BHAGAT RAM MANHAR:
SHRI RAJU PARMAR:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebration, a NRI Conference held in January,2003 have urged Government to reduce high taxes in hotel and tourism industry;

(b) if so, the complete details of suggestions made by the above Conference; and

(c) what is Government's reaction to these suggestions?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. At the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Celebrations held in January, 2003 it was recommended that there should be a reduction of taxes on tourism by Central and State Governments.

(c) The issue of rationalization of taxes has been taken up with the State Governments/concerned Ministries and at various forums including at the State Tourism Ministers Conference.